1 **Introduction** (Evan T. Jones)

The Newport Medieval Ship is the best-preserved late-medieval vessel yet discovered. Built c.1450 in northern Spain, it was abandoned twenty years later while undergoing repairs in an inlet off the River Usk, on the southern edge of the town. Since the ship's recovery in 2002, archaeological investigations of its timbers and associated artefacts have revealed much about the shipping technology of the period. As discussed by Ian Friel in this volume, the fifteenth century saw a flourishing of 'big ships'.[1] The Newport Medieval Ship, with an estimated cargo capacity of 161 tons burden, was such a vessel: it would have been one of the great merchantmen of its day. Ships were the largest, most complex and most expensive machines of the pre-modern world. That made them both major financial investments and symbols of power, whether owned by the Crown, great Lords or wealthy merchants. When William Canynges of Bristol died in 1474, a note added to his tomb boasted of the ten great ships he had owned; when a fifteenth-century Florentine merchant wrote about a huge carrack he had bought, he bragged that 'it can load the whole of Spain'.[2] The Newport Ship thus provides an opportunity not just to understand a technology, but to engage with one of the most symbolically-laden artefacts of the pre-modern world. Great ships were important in their time and they remain emotionally charged objects to this day: as the popular reaction to the discovery of the Newport Medieval Ship itself illustrates.

Since it was found, nautical archaeologists have spent a great deal of time, effort and money excavating and preserving the ship, employing some of the most advanced recording techniques yet used. The three-dimensional contact digitising of every timber, followed by

the three-dimensional printing of the individual vessel parts to scale, have made it possible not only to understand the ship as a wreck, but to piece it back together, virtually and as a physical scale model, in a way that would have been impossible even a few years ago. It is a unique vessel, which has been recorded and reconstructed in pioneering ways. Meanwhile, developments in the field of dendrochronology mean that the ship's timbers and those associated with its final phase of maintenance and deposition can be dated closely and their provenance identified. So, we now know where the planks used in the initial construction came from, where the ship underwent repairs and, within a year or two, when it was abandoned. When this information is combined with artefact assemblages and environmental samples associated with the vessel's life, it is also possible to say something about how and where it was employed.

The tight dating of the Newport Ship's construction and demise makes it possible to associate the vessel with both specific historical events, such as the Wars of the Roses, and broader economic developments, such as the growth in Anglo-Iberian trade during the second half of the fifteenth century. The ship operated during a tumultuous period, both in England and abroad, which resulted in major realignments to European trade and its associated shipping markets. When I first visited the Newport Ship project in December 2012, it was clear that those investigating the vessel had developed a stunningly sophisticated understanding of it as a piece of technology. Yet, as a maritime historian specialising in the trade and shipping of the Bristol Channel, it was clear that less consideration had been given to the context in which the vessel operated, or to how it might have been employed. What sort of commerce would a ship like this have been involved in? How many voyages would it have made each year? To what extent would it have sailed fully laden? Beyond such economic questions, there were others, to do with Newport, its region, the international

setting and the general political scene, that needed more attention. What part did the port play in the region's shipping industry during this period? What was the nature and extent of the town's commercial and urban networks? What particular risks and opportunities did those involved in shipping face during the 1450s and 60s?

A number of people were involved in discussions about how to promote research on the ship's broader context. These included Dr Toby Jones (chief archaeologist and curator of the ship), Professor Nigel Nayling (nautical archaeologist, University of Wales Trinity Saint David), Dr Rowena Archer (medieval historian, University of Oxford) and Margaret Condon (historian of Henry VII's reign and my co-researcher on The Cabot Project in Bristol). We decided that the best way forward would be to hold a conference to bring together a group of leading experts to explore 'The World of the Newport Ship'. The immediate aim was to provide an interpretive framework for the vessel, which could assist ongoing investigations and future curation. With plans to put the ship on view in a museum setting, accompanied by interpretive displays and commentaries, the value of doing this was clear. In this case, historical archaeology would not be 'a handmaiden to history', as Noël Hume controversially proposed in the 1960s.[3] Rather, the historians would be 'handmaidens to archaeology'. On the other hand, there was no expectation that they would be passive assistants, merely there to show off the archaeological remains to their best effect. It was anticipated that the interplay between the archaeologists and historians would generate fruitful research questions and lead to new lines of inquiry. Lastly, by bringing together a group of specialists to focus on a very particular period, place and object, in what was effectively a mini research project, we hoped that the result might be more than the sum of its parts. That would be particularly likely if the scholars involved were able to benefit from each other's research both before and after the meeting.

What emerged from our deliberations was a plan for a two-day conference, which I was to convene at the University of Bristol. The idea was to table a set of papers that would start with the ship as an archaeological object and then work outwards. We would explore the vessel's local and regional context, before moving on to the broader international scene. In the process, the conference would take in major aspects of the ship's world. These included the development of maritime trade in the period and the nature of the international shipping market. It would also consider issues that affected the general environment in which ships operated, such as the risks posed by piracy and the nature of navigation on the Severn Sea / Môr Hafren – as the Bristol Channel was then known.[4] The input of Iberian scholars was particularly important, both because the ship was built from timber that came from northern Spain and because the archaeological evidence suggested that it had traded with Portugal. To ensure that we had a coherent set of papers, the speakers were to be invited experts, chosen for their ability to bring distinct perspectives to the subject. That we were able to propose such a panel was a function of the early financial support received from Gretchen Bauta, a private Canadian benefactor. She acted as the initial underwriter through the auspices of The Cabot Project, which is investigating the Bristol voyages of discovery of the later fifteenth century. With Mrs Bauta's support secured, others came forward with additional funding. These included the Friends of the Newport Ship, Newport City Council and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. This allowed us to be more ambitious in the speakers we invited and it ensured that we could make the conference accessible and affordable to a large academic and non-academic audience.

Once the speakers had been identified, Margaret Condon facilitated the scholarly endeavour by carrying out an intensive programme of transcription of the surviving Bristol 'particular' customs accounts of the second half of the fifteenth century. These accounts detail the day-to-day trading activity of the Bristol Channel's chief port, which lies just twelve miles across the Severn from the entrance to Newport's haven. England's 'particular' customs accounts provide the most detailed records of international trade for *any* country in the pre-modern era. Their value has long been recognised, with some of the Bristol records of the late fifteenth century having been published, in printed form, as early as the 1930s.[5] The Bristol records of this period are especially suited to the study of shipping, both because they indicate where vessels were sailing and because they specify whether a vessel was a boat, a small ship, or a great ship. As such, the accounts provide an outstanding source for researching the international trade and shipping of the region. Transcribing the accounts into Excel spreadsheets made it possible to conduct detailed statistical analyses of the data. In addition, the information was used to address specific qualitative questions – such as when and where individual ships sailed, what they were carrying and who employed them. The transcriptions of the customs accounts were circulated to the speakers in draft form before the conference took place and were employed by many of the contributors' papers and subsequent chapters. The accounts used in this volume, along with a number of others, are being published online through the University of Bristol's e-repository, accompanied by detailed introductions.[6]

The conference took place on two sweltering days, from 17-18 July 2014. We had capacity for 110 delegates and 'sold out' two weeks before the meeting. Since then all the contributors have conducted further research, in many cases in collaboration with each other. The current volume is the result of this endeavour, comprising a series of chapters that had

their starting point in the conference but which in all cases represent significant advances on the original papers.

The value of publishing conference proceedings is sometimes questioned, often rightly. Conferences are frequently disparate in nature and the scholars who give the best papers may wish to publish their results elsewhere. In this case, however, it was clear from the outset that we should produce a volume based on the papers. With the primary intent of the conference being to provide a resource for those involved in curating and interpreting the ship, it behoved us to gather the results together and make them widely available. We owed that to both the ship's present and future curators and to the many members of the public, in Newport and beyond, who have been fascinated by the vessel and who have been instrumental in driving its investigation forward. These include HRH The Prince of Wales, who has a long-standing interest in nautical archaeology. Given his interest in both Newport and the Newport Medieval Ship, he was generous enough to write the foreword to this volume. Thanks are also due to Gretchen Bauta, who followed up on her initial support for the conference with additional funding. This covered some of the later research and publication costs associated with this volume's production.[7] Other contributors to the book's costs include the Friends of the Newport Ship and Newport City Council.[8]

Although this volume was written with a specific primary purpose, it will be of value to a much wider audience. All the chapters contain new research, the bulk of material has not appeared elsewhere and some of the findings and methodologies employed are highly original. Taken together, they provide one of the most intensive studies of a pre-modern maritime world ever undertaken. Of the eleven chapters in this volume, ten are based on the

original conference papers: that by Dr Richard Stone was a later addition, albeit he was involved from the start as a co-convenor of the conference. Three of the speakers, Dr Rowena Archer, Margaret Condon and Dr Michael Barkham, were unable to submit their chapters due to unforeseen personal circumstances. Although their contributions are not included, all three scholars fed into the wider research project. Since their research had an impact on our interpretation of the ship and its world, their findings are discussed below.

The Chapters

The volume begins with a contribution from the two lead archaeologists working on the ship: Dr Toby Jones (Newport City Council) and Professor Nigel Nayling (University of Wales Trinity Saint David). Professor Nayling's specialism lies in the field of dendrochronology, which involves the study of the tree rings found in timber both to date the wood and to determine where it came from. Much of the basic archaeological research on the ship has been published elsewhere, with the main report now in preparation.[9] Given this, no attempt has been made to reproduce the archaeologists' technical findings. Rather the function of Jones and Nayling's chapter is to highlight and explain the main results of the archaeological work carried out to date and the interpretations of the ship's life and use that have been constructed from this research. Their contribution thus provides the archaeological 'base point' for the later chapters, which seek to interpret, contextualise and explain the data found by the archaeologists. The most important findings for current purposes have been the archaeologists' ability to date the construction of the ship to within a year or two and to show that the vessel was built using timber coming from northern Spain, most likely from, or close to, the Basque Country. Beyond this, they show that some of the patch repairs conducted on

the ship's hull during the late 1450s or early 1460s were carried out using wood from Britain or Ireland. The latest of the ship's timbers seem to have been associated with its final phase of repair in Newport during the late 1460s. Both the wood used for this repair and the props employed to support the vessel during the refitting came from Britain – most probably from Newport's immediate hinterland.

The final repairs carried out on the ship were extensive, involving the replacement of some of its structural timbers. The ship had most likely been taken into the slip on a high spring tide and then propped upright. This would have allowed access to most of the hull's exterior and made it easier to conduct work inside the vessel. Before the repairs commenced it seems likely that the ship would have been emptied of any cargo, stores and moveable fittings. While undergoing repairs the vessel heeled over, apparently as a result of a collapse in the support structure on its starboard side. This resulted in the ship being inundated with water and silt. Given that ships were valuable items, its owner, or owners, may have tried to right the vessel. There is some evidence that salvage was attempted, with holes being drilled into the starboard side, presumably to drain the vessel. When it was clear that the ship could not be saved, any accessible objects that remained were removed and the hull was cut down to, or close to, the muddy bottom of the inlet. This would have allowed the recovered timber to be reused for other purposes and made the waterfront accessible by others. The later construction of a stone slipway over the remains of the ship meant that the same site could have been used by later shipwrights or merchants.

Apart from the work on the timber, Jones and Nayling discuss the environmental and small-find evidence. Perhaps the most noteworthy results of this are that the ship seems to

have visited southern Iberia during the autumn on one or more occasions, as evidenced from the flowering heather and prickly juniper found on board. This was most likely used as dunnage (packing material) to protect casks in transit, such as wine barrels. The main interest of the small-find evidence, such as the pottery fragments and coins found on board, is that little of this 'occupational' material is of British origin: Portuguese coins and ceramics predominate. This material mostly came from the bilges and probably represents accidental loss or discarded waste associated with the ship's daily life. Food remains found in the bilges are also suggestive of a southern European diet. All this implies that, even if the ship was British owned at the time it was being repaired in Newport, it had spent much time in southern Iberia.

The first two purely 'historical' chapters are those by Ian Friel and Susan Rose. These establish some of the broad context in which the ship operated. Dr Friel shows that the mid-fifteenth century was an era of 'big ships', defined as those over 150 tons burden. So, while the Newport Medieval Ship, with an estimated carrying capacity of 161 tons, would have been a large ship by contemporary British standards, it would not have been an exceptional one. Friel suggests that large vessels are likely to have been favoured because they were easier to defend and because they were well suited to the carriage of bulk cargoes on long-distance routes. The Newport Ship was a clinker-built vessel with a hull made up of overlapping strakes of wood, attached to a relatively light internal frame. This too was typical for its period. During the second half of the fifteenth century, ships of this type would be progressively phased out, to be replaced by smaller, carvel-built vessels, with more complex rigs. These were cheaper to build, cheaper to repair and probably more flexible to operate. All this suggests that the Newport Medieval Ship represents the final flourishing of a great

medieval shipbuilding tradition, rather than it being the forerunner of the vessels that would dominate the seas of the early modern period.

Susan Rose's chapter examines the issue of maritime lawlessness to test the common notion that the seas of the period were infested with pirates. That ships did require defending is well established and, indeed, is evidenced from various items found on the Newport Ship, such as stone shot, an archer's bracer and fragments of a helmet. On the other hand, Rose shows that the seas were not as lawless as is often assumed. Those accused of piracy were rarely said to have committed acts of extreme violence and in most cases the perpetrators claimed that their actions were legal. Murderous attacks undertaken by 'full-time' pirates operating beyond the reach of the law were rare. Rose's research shows that piracy on the open sea, or seizure in port, were real risks and it is possible that the Newport Ship ended up in English hands as a result of such an act. On the other hand, more ships were likely to have been lost to the elements or human error. This may include the Newport Ship itself, given that the most plausible explanation for its final demise is that the props used to support it during renovation collapsed as a result of a strong tide, a storm, or neglect by the shipwrights.

Bob Trett and Professor Ralph Griffiths examine the local context of the ship. Trett introduces Newport as a town and he examines its role in the shipping industry. His work highlights the extent to which Newport was controlled by its Marcher Lords, making it less autonomous than many English boroughs. Between 1460 and 1471 the Lordship of Newport was alternately in the custody of Sir William Herbert, who became Wales' greatest magnate, and the Earl of Warwick, famous for his role as the 'Kingmaker' during the Wars of the Roses. Both men had personal fleets, in an unsettled era when great Lords could have private

navies, as well as private armies. Such ships were used for commerce, privateering and military activity. Trett suggests that the Newport Ship could have belonged to one, or both, of these magnates. For reasons of cost or security, either might have chosen to get the ship repaired in a port he controlled. A letter written by Warwick in November 1469, which Trett discusses in detail, shows that the Earl ordered repairs on a ship he had in Newport. This could be the Newport Medieval Ship itself, albeit this cannot be proven. More generally, Trett's chapter shows that, although Newport had limited engagement in foreign trade, large merchantman said to be 'of Newport' were not unusual during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These vessels commonly found employment servicing the overseas trade of nearby Bristol, just across the Severn.

Griffiths' chapter explores navigation in the Severn Sea. It was a busy waterway, but one known for its many obstacles. Wrecks and beachings were not uncommon, including along the coast close to Newport. It is thus possible that the Newport Ship was a beached vessel that had been brought into the town for repairs. Alternatively, Griffiths points out that there is evidence of foreign ships being taken by force in the Bristol Channel, particularly during periods of unrest. Such a seizure might explain how a Basque-built ship ended up in English hands. From this general discussion, Griffiths moves on to the more specific historical context of Newport and the Wars of the Roses. Like Trett, he highlights the potential role of Lord Herbert and/or the Earl of Warwick as possible owners of the vessel. Griffiths examines all that is known about Herbert's fleet during the 1460s. This included the *Mary*, a great ship that also appears in the Bristol customs accounts of 1465/6, where it is described as the *Mary Herberd*. It is possible that this is the Newport Ship.

Moving from the local to the regional context, Professor Peter Fleming examines the urban hierarchy and commercial relations of the Severn Sea region. In particular, he shows how closely bound Newport and the other communities around the estuary were to Bristol, which was then both England's foremost provincial town and the chief port of the West. In an age when road traffic was slow and expensive, the Severn and its tributaries were important communication arteries that facilitated the movement of goods and people. By mapping Bristol's interactions using a number of sources, such as wills and apprenticeship registers, Fleming defines a region that had the Severn Sea at its heart, extending along the Welsh coast as far as Pembrokeshire and up the River Severn, deep into the West Midlands. For the people of Monmouthshire, Bristol was a major market, a source of goods and a place to which the ambitious frequently sent their sons to learn a trade. Bristol welcomed the Welsh, many of whom thrived in the port and rose to high civic office. So, while Newport today is very much a Welsh city, in the fifteenth century it might be more appropriately be considered a town on the Severn Sea, in a region headed by Bristol.

Rowena Archer's conference paper is one that could not be turned into a chapter. Her paper explored how overseas trade was affected by the Wars of the Roses, examining, in particular, aristocratic involvement in commerce. A common trope of English history is that the country's nobility had an aversion to trade. Whether or not that is true of other periods, Dr Archer demonstrated that such prejudices did not prevail during Edward IV's reign. Indeed, as a king he was not merely interested in promoting overseas trade, he engaged in it himself as a way of raising revenue. If England ever had a 'merchant king', it was Edward. His activities set the tone for the broader aristocracy. It has already been noted that the Earl of Warwick and Sir William Herbert had their own ships, which they used for commerce, privateering and warfare. They were not the only nobles, however, to own ships or engage in

maritime commerce. In this respect, Archer's findings fit with what is known of Robert Sturmy's famous 1457/8 voyage from Bristol to the Eastern Mediterranean. This was the most daring English commercial venture of the fifteenth century. The expedition involved an attempt by Bristol merchants, along with a number of aristocratic backers, to exploit the disruption caused by the fall of Constantinople (1453) by breaking the Italian monopoly over trade to the Levant.[10] Given the intense engagement of aristocrats in trade during this period, it would not be surprising if the Newport Medieval Ship was noble owned.

Most of the chapters in the second half of the volume are by economic historians, exploring trade, shipping and the way that international politics affected the nature and direction of both. My chapter uses the Bristol customs accounts to examine the shipping market of this time, the ways in which ships were deployed and the structure of the merchant marine. One of my chief conclusions is that there was a long-standing imbalance between the demand for import and export freight space from England. As a result, ships sailing between the Severn Sea and the Continent almost always sailed out 'in ballast', carrying valuable but lightweight cargoes of cloth. By contrast, when returning home they were typically fully laden with bulky cargoes, such as wine, olive oil, salt and iron. One consequence of this was that ship-owners had to make their profits entirely, or almost entirely, from the sale of freight space on the inbound leg of the voyage. By examining the size and composition of the ships appearing in the 1465/6 customs account, I show that the Newport Ship would most likely have been listed as a 'navis' (great ship): a term reserved for vessels of at least 150 tons burden. Such ships were engaged primarily in the trade to Portugal during the later 1450s and 1460s. Lisbon became the principal destination for Bristol merchants following England's loss of Gascony in 1453. The main voyage of the year commenced around September, to fetch home wine and olive oil. This was typically followed by a second voyage in the spring

or early summer. While the sea passage to or from Portugal would normally have taken about three weeks, ships generally spent about three months in Lisbon between passages, waiting in port while their merchants sold their cloth and bought return cargoes. When an English ship returned home it usually spent several weeks in port, while its owner prepared for the next voyage, assembled a cargo and refitted the vessel. These long turnaround times meant that great ships rarely completed more than two voyages each year. If it can be assumed that ships being refitted at home would have been unmanned, or occupied only by a skeleton crew, this implies that the great bulk of any occupation debris that accumulated on English ships would have been deposited during their time in foreign ports. Given this, the presence of Portuguese coins and broken pottery on the Newport Medieval Ship does not prove that the ship was foreign owned: English ships are likely to have accumulated similar artefact assemblages.

Margaret Condon used the customs accounts alongside other archival sources to explore the nature of the great ships engaged in foreign trade, showing how patterns of ship acquisition shifted in Bristol and other western ports in the later fifteenth century. This included a move away from noble ownership and transfer of title by seizure, to legitimate purchase and wholly merchant ownership. In addition, Condon argued that the expansion of Basque trade during the later fifteenth century, and the relationships built with individual Basque masters, encouraged Bristol's merchants to engage in more ambitious commercial ventures, particularly in the Mediterranean. As such, her research underlines the extent to which an increased focus on Iberia and Iberian trade, of which the Newport Medieval Ship was a part, promoted Bristol's Age of Discovery. This was to culminate in Europe's discovery and exploration of North America, following John Cabot's famous voyage from the port in 1497. Regrettably, although Margaret Condon did produce a draft of her chapter,

illness prevented her from completing it by the time required. It is hoped, however, that in future her valuable contribution will appear in print.

Wendy Childs' chapter starts by providing an overview of English overseas trade in the late Middle Ages, noting the main trade routes and commodities involved. From this she narrows down to the specific conditions of the Severn Sea's trade and the geopolitical developments of the mid-fifteenth century. This included the loss of Gascony to the French in 1453, which put a temporary blight on England's trade with Bordeaux. While this trade would recover later in the century, for most of the period in which the Newport Medieval Ship was operating, trade with Bristol's chief traditional trading partner was limited. Childs' work also highlights the importance of the pilgrim traffic, with one licence being issued in 1462 to a 400-ton vessel called the *Trinity* of Newport. This confirms that Newport did sometimes possess great ships: indeed, the *Trinity* was considerably larger than the vessel excavated. Finally, Childs explores the risks ship owners faced during these uncertain times. She examines the use of 'safe-conducts' and considers what the associated records reveal about the nature of the shipping industry in the period. For current purposes, her most significant finding is that most of English safe-conducts issued to foreign ships during the 1450s and 1460s went to Basque vessels. This highlights the region's role as a provider of shipping services to England in general and Bristol, in particular.

Richard Stone's submission was commissioned to augment that of Childs, by providing a detailed statistical analysis of Bristol's trade during the second half of the fifteenth century. This is based primarily on three of the surviving Bristol 'particular' customs accounts. His chapter provides hard data on trade, commodities and markets. One

conclusion is that, although great ships sailed to a variety of places and carried a range of goods, Bristol's trade was dominated by a small number of commodities, carried to a limited number of places. Bristol's commerce saw some notable shifts during the second half of the fifteenth century, with a great expansion in the trade to the Spanish Kingdom of Castile during the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Yet, at the time of the Newport Medieval Ship, about 80 per cent of Bristol's trade was with Portugal. Exports of fine woollen broadcloth accounted for the great bulk of English exports to Lisbon, while wine and olive oil accounted for most of the imports.

Dr Michael Barkham's paper could not, unfortunately, be turned into a chapter. An expert on the trade and shipping of the Basque Country during the early modern period, Barkham was invited because the Newport Medieval Ship was built using timber from that region. It is well known that the Spanish Basque ports, such as San Sebastián and Bilbao, were heavily engaged in the late-medieval shipping industry. Their inhabitants were notable shipbuilders, great mariners and major providers of shipping services to other nations. Drawing primarily on records from the sixteenth century, which is much better documented than the fifteenth, and using local records largely unfamiliar even to native Spanish scholars, Barkham's paper showed how well-organised the region's shipbuilding industry was, with vessels being commissioned by both local men and foreign buyers. The success of the shipbuilding industry was based on access to good quality timber, which was obtained from upriver plantations, and on the region's high-carbon iron, which was used to make the nails and other metalwork that held ships together. These factors allowed a relatively small region to become one of the major centres for the European shipping industry. So, it should not be a surprise that the Newport Medieval Ship was Basque built: in its era the same would have been true of a significant portion of Europe's marine.

Professor Hilario Casado Alonso (University of Valladolid) and Dr Flávio Miranda (Nova University of Lisbon–IEM, CITCEM–UP) provide a joint-authored chapter that explores Iberia's economy during the fifteenth century and the development of its maritime trade. It is well known that Spain and Portugal became Europe's leading commercial and maritime powers during the Age of Discovery. They were the first to establish colonies in the Americas after 1492 and by the end of the sixteenth century they had, between them, established extra-European trade routes that encircled the globe. What is less appreciated is that the rise of Portugal and Spain as maritime forces pre-dated the extra-European expansion: both were major players in European commerce by the time of the Newport Ship sailed the seas. A number of factors account for their success: including the Moors' loss of control over the Straits of Gibraltar during the thirteenth century and Iberia's rapid recovery from the Black Death (1347-9). The former development allowed the growth of maritime trade between the Mediterranean and Northwest Europe. Before this occurred, Iberia had been a peripheral zone on the edge of two great maritime worlds: that of the Mediterranean and that of northwest Europe. The opening of trade between the two via the Straits of Gibraltar turned Iberia into the lynchpin of a consolidated maritime economy. This encouraged the expansion of Iberia's ports, facilitated the development of the peninsula's industrial base and stimulated indigenous commercial enterprise. Such changes had turned Iberia into one of the wealthiest and most successful parts of Europe by the mid-fifteenth century. That the Newport Medieval Ship was of Iberian origin and was engaged in trade with southern Iberia is thus not surprising. Whether the ship was owned by Basques, Englishmen or even the Portuguese, much of its trade would have been conducted between Iberia and northern European ports: particularly those of England and the Netherlands.

Professor Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli's chapter concludes the volume. He broadens the context of the study still further to examine Italian engagement in trade and shipping during the Middle Ages. No evidence has been found to suggest that the Newport Medieval Ship sailed to Italy, or indeed to the Mediterranean. Yet the Italians remain relevant because they ran Europe's most extensive and sophisticated commercial networks and employed the greatest ships. As such, the chapter helps to establish the broader maritime context within which the Newport Ship operated. While the ship was a large vessel by the standards of the English shipping industry, many greater vessels sailed the seas. Most of the vessels the Italians employed on voyages to northern Europe were of at least 400-500 tons burden, while the mighty Genoese carracks, which carried alum and oriental products direct from the Ottoman Empire to the Netherlands, were well over 1,000 tons. Much of this activity was organised by official companies, such as the Venetian State Galley Fleet. This is very different to the practices of Atlantic Europe, where ships were typically owned and operated by private individuals acting either alone or in small partnerships. Employing the rich archival records that have been left behind by both the state companies and Italy's wealthy merchant houses, Guidi-Bruscoli examines the nature of the ships employed and how they were used. This focus on shipping is particularly helpful in the context of this volume because England's medieval maritime historians have conducted much less work on shipping than they have on trade.

The Value of the Newport Medieval Ship

When archaeologists are asked to explain the core purpose of their activity, they typically cite the opportunity that excavation and survey offer to investigate the past. That

generally is given as the purpose of archaeology: the study of the past through its material remains.[11] Such arguments work well for prehistoric archaeology because material remains are all that exist. Archaeologists working on well-documented periods, however, have often struggled to define their contribution.[12] Most often, they have focused on topics that were not well recorded in their time but are regarded as important today. In the Americas, for instance, historical archaeologists have concentrated on the formation of early colonial societies and their relations with indigenous peoples, or on the cultural life of slave plantations. Meanwhile maritime archaeologists working on historic periods have often identified their contribution in terms of their ability to throw light on poorly-documented aspects of mariners' lives: such as the private trade of those employed by the East India Company (as evidenced by wrecks) or the possessions and state of health of the hundreds of soldiers and mariners who went down with the *Mary Rose* in 1545.[13] While such lines of enquiry are surely valid, it cannot be said that great medieval ships attracted little notice from contemporaries: their monetary and strategic value ensured that they are better documented than most other aspects of the medieval world. Shipping, trade, shipbuilding, piracy and naval affairs are all activities that generated copious written records at the time. And when it comes to late medieval Europe, many of those records have survived, particularly in England. These include: fiscal records, court cases, private business accounts and the administrative records of both the State and port towns. All of these sources have been used by maritime historians and all would acknowledge that they have only scratched the surface of what can be done with them. So why conduct archaeological investigation on wrecks such as the Newport Ship at all? A utilitarian approach to research, which seeks merely to maximise the knowledge of our maritime past, might conclude that documentary research is more cost effective.

Concentrating solely on research outcomes, however, misses one of the most significant contributions of archaeology. Material remains provide a palpable connection to the past, which can capture and exercise the imagination in a way that documentary research seldom does. Manuscript records rarely involve much poetry, personality or character. As such, they cannot inspire people in the way that an artefact can. When people hold an object in their hands, or even view it directly, it provides a sense of connection that a transcription cannot. Historians know this, for even the least romantic appreciate the difference between reading a copy of a document and holding the original. Artefacts, as Jules Prown pointed out in one of the pioneering works of history's 'material turn', 'constitute the only class of historical events that occurred in the past but survive into the present.'[14] Archaeologists have thus often claimed that artefacts provide 'a tangible bridge that compacts time by connecting past and present.'[15] As James Deetz showed in work that has inspired a generation of archaeologists, this may be true of both small objects, such as a pot or clay pipe, and large objects, such as a house.[16] Objects can be 'read' to throw light on the people that made them and they can be used to tell stories about past societies that people seem to be 'hard wired' to connect to. How else can one explain why people undertake billions of visits each year to view objects, works of art, or monuments that might be examined in greater detail via high-resolution digital images viewed on an electronic device?

It is the sense of connection a great physical object can inspire that explains the campaign to excavate, investigate and display the Newport Medieval Ship. The work done on it was not undertaken because anyone planned to do it and there was initially little enthusiasm on an official level for carrying it out. Rather, the stimulus came from below, from the people of Newport. This Welsh city is best known as a product of the industrial revolution. Yet, while the people Newport are justly proud of their nineteenth-century heritage and the role

their city played in the industrial era, they are also aware that their roots go much deeper. Newport Castle, along with other medieval survivals, are reminders that it was a significant town and port during the Middle Ages. For as the name implies, Newport was established as a trading centre and waterborne commerce has always been central to its identity. This may be why the discovery of the ship promoted such excitement: it provided a link to a medieval past that people were aware of, but for which few tangible elements remained. Moreover, this was not just a little coastal vessel; it was a great merchantman, neatly caught by a steel cofferdam and readily perceivable as a large ship. This helped to ensure that, once discovered, the vessel became, not just an archaeological find, but a relic of the city's medieval past: something to be preserved and cherished.

Although the Newport Medieval Ship can tell us much about nautical technology, with a precision that can seldom be obtained from the written record, its chief value may thus be as an artefact that has captured the popular imagination and helped engage a community with its past. If it has become an icon for Newport, this is something that historians and archaeologists should respect in its own right. On the other hand, that does not mean that the ship should be placed in modern version of medieval reliquary, simply to be cherished and venerated. Indeed, that is not something that the local community desire. Both they and the academics involved in the project recognise the value of the ship as a tool for engaging the broader public with the medieval maritime world.

Ships have always captured the public imagination and they still do today. They have meaning to people and this is a meaning around which historians, archaeologists and heritage professionals can join. For historians to have acted as 'handmaidens to archaeology' in this

project is thus not a demeaning role. Research of any type, be it historical or archaeological, has no purpose if not communicated. And while much of this communication occurs within academia, it has become recognised increasingly that one of the jobs of historians is both to communicate their findings to a wider public and to explain how they reached their findings. In writing this volume, the contributors hope that they will be able to communicate directly and indirectly with multiple audiences. As academics, our primary audience is other researchers: be they historians, archaeologists, students or curators. For them, the chapters in this volume should serve to assist the interpretation of the ship and help to formulate new research questions. On a broader level, the volume provides a substantial set of original perspectives that, taken together, provide a more holistic interpretation of a fifteenth-century maritime world than any achieved previously. As such, it opens a window on the nature and operations of an industry that was instrumental to the success of both the Age of Discovery and the subsequent commercial, maritime and imperial expansion of Europe.

Beyond the academic audience, we hope that this volume will also be accessible to the general public. Having driven the Newport Ship project forward, we feel that the public have a right to learn more than our broad conclusions, as synthesised by current or future curators. The public have a right to our detailed findings and they have the right to learn our methods. As academics, we thus see this as an opportunity not just to tell the public what we have learnt: but to show them how we *do* history, how we *do* archaeology. For as teachers and researchers, this is at the core of our practice.

[1] Ian Friel: a point supported by my own work on the fifteenth century customs accounts.

[2] Canynges' ships and their sizes were recorded by the antiquarian William Worcestre, following a visit to St Mary Redcliff in c.1478, where Canynges' tomb is located: John H. Harvey (ed.), *William Worcestre: Itineraries* (Oxford, 1969), pp. This suggests there was already a record of Canynges' ships by date, albeit the current plaque above his tomb appears, on stylistic grounds, to be seventeenth century. For the reference to the Florentine ship, see Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli's chapter in this volume, n. 31.

[3] Noël I. Hume, 'Archaeology: handmaiden to History', *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 41/2 (1964), pp. 214-25.

[4] The western limits of the 'Severn Sea' extended somewhat further than the Isle of Lundy, which is typically taken as the limit of the Bristol Channel today. The Tudor geographer, Roger Barlow, who knew these waters well, defined the 'see called severne' as all those waters east of the Scilly Isles 'betwene the principalitie of wales and englande': E. G. R. Taylor (ed.), *A Brief Summe of Geographie, by Roger Barlow* (Abingdon, 2016), p. 32.

[5] E. M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages* (Bristol Record Society Publications, Vol. VII, Bristol, 1937). A number of the sixteenth century accounts have also been published, both in print and electronically in EXCEL databases: Susan Flavin & Evan T, Jones (eds.), *Bristol's Trade with Ireland and the Continent: The Evidence of the Exchequer Customs Accounts* (Dublin, 2009); http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm. Several earlier scholars have made significant use of the fifteenth-century Bristol customs accounts, including: E. M. Carus Wilson, 'The overseas trade of Bristol' in E. Power & M.M. Postan (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933); W. R. Childs, 'Ireland's trade with England in the Later Middle Ages', *Irish Economic & Social History*, IX (1982). 'The commercial shipping of south-western England in the later fifteenth-century, *Mariner's Mirror*, LXXXIII

(1997); D. H. Sacks, *Trade, Society and Politics in Bristol, 1500-1640*. 2 vols (New York, 1985).

[6] In future we also hope to plan to publish the records in printed form as a Bristol Records Society volume.

[7] In January 2015, Gretchen Bauta donated £13,000 towards the cost of producing the volume and carrying out further research, transcription and publication of the fifteenth-century customs accounts for Bristol.

[8] The Friends of the Newport Ship donated £1,750 towards the production costs, Newport City Council £1,000.

[9] See Toby Jones and Nigel Nayling's chapter in this volume for references to published works.

[10] Stuart Jenks, *Robert Sturmy's Commercial Expedition to the Mediterranean (1457/8),* Bristol Record Society Vol. 58 (Bristol, 2006), pp. 16-28.

[11] Clive Gamble, *Archaeology: The Basics* (Third edition, 2015), p. 2.

[12] Alan Mayne, 'On the edges of History: reflections on Historical Archaeology', *The American Historical Review* (2008) 113 (1), pp. 93-118.

[13] Joe Flatman and Mark Staniforth 'Historical maritime archaeology', in Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2006).

[14] Jules David Prown, 'The truth of material culture: history of fiction?' in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (eds.), *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, 1993), pp. 2-3.

[15] Mayne, 'On the edges of History', p. 102.

[16] James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York, 1977).